

Brute for the Home Team

By Dr. Ed Dunkelblau, PhD

Sports are a great opportunity for camaraderie, teamwork and expressing our competitive spirit. We love to root for the home team and we idolize, almost deify our sports heroes. This year's playoffs gave us an event that has called into question our values, our behavior and our caring for community and one another.

In game 6 of the Cubs playoffs, a devout Cub fan, while watching and listening to his beloved team at Wrigley Field, impulsively reached up to catch a foul ball. This act, automatic to almost any baseball fan, may have interfered with the Cubs getting a player out. The Cubs proceeded to offer sub par pitching, shoddy fielding and allowed the Marlins to get more hits than the Brittany Spears website. They eventually lost the game and the playoffs.

But alas, this is not my concern.

My concern is the horrible reaction to this spectator's spontaneous action by his fellow Cub fans and the local and national media. The response on the part of some fans was one of threats and impulsive violence (throwing objects and verbal assaults) to the point where the fan had to be removed from the game for his own safety. The TV coverage went out of its way to identify and frame who this guy was. The print media has published the fan's photo, name, address and place of employment, making this information available to any angry, vengeful or misguided person.

I know that Cub fans are frustrated. Ninety-five years without a championship will do that to a person. I also know that the fans were disappointed. Getting so close to the prize only serves to get our hopes higher and drops our defenses. It seems, though, that our choice in dealing with these feelings has been to find a single culprit, someone to blame for all of our sadness and hurt. This is extremely unfortunate. Unless this unfortunate Cub fan can be held responsible for poor pitching and questionable fielding, this guy has no responsibility for what happened.

I believe that it is time for all of us in Chicago to ask ourselves "What kind of people do we want to be?" With aggression and violence permeating our world, do we really want to hurt someone who was a Cub fan watching his favorite team at his favorite stadium?

Does the media want to risk a person's safety and well-being for the sake of selling a few newspapers or cans of beer?

What kind of community do we want our children to be part of? Going to the ballgame has always been a great opportunity for families to bond and pass along identity and meaning. I suggest that we must model good citizenship and supportive concern for one another at these events. Root for your team? Great! Participate and celebrate their victories? Of course! Get revenge for their losses by hurting someone else? Never!

We must maintain appropriate, humane relationships in all of our endeavors-especially those that stimulate strong emotions.

Will we have another opportunity to show what great fans we are? Of course, Wait 'til next year.